Introducing Communication Theory 6th edition West Solutions Manual

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Chapter 2
Thinking About the Field: Traditions and Contexts

Chapter Outline

I. Seven Traditions in the Communication Field

- Robert Craig (Craig, 1999; Craig and Muller, 2007) outlines communication theory in one of the more thoughtful, intellectually valuable ways, assisting people in understanding "themselves, their society, and their culture in a communicative way" (Garcia-Jimenez & Craig, 2010, p. 430).
- Craig terms the discussed framework (refer to Figure 2.1) as "traditions" to highlight the belief that theoretical development doesn't just occur naturally.
- Craig and Muller (2007) point out, "[T]heorists invent new ideas to solve problems they perceive in existing ideas in a particular tradition" (p. xiii). And, although traditions suggest adhering to a historical preference, Craig and Muller are quick to point out that traditions change frequently and, like communication, are dynamic.

A. The Rhetorical Tradition

- This tradition suggests that people are interested in public address and public speaking and their functions in society.
- The rhetorical tradition necessarily involves elements pertaining to language and the audience.
- The tradition also includes a discussion pertaining to audience appeals; how do audience members respond to emotions, for example?
    - To what extent does the power of language move people to emotional and decisive action?
    - How are people influenced or swayed by the appeals by mass media?
    - What role does personal example play in having others accept one's point of view?
    - What effect does speaking to a large group of people have on the perceptions or actions of that group?
    - To what extent does the rhetorical tradition challenge the common belief that

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"telling the plain truth is something other than the strategic adaptation of a message to an audience"?

B. The Semiotic Tradition

- **Semiotics** is the study of signs.
  - Signs are part of a social life; they stand for something else.
- According to the semiotic tradition, meaning is achieved when people share a common language.
  - People arrive at a communication exchange with various fields of experience and values placed on these experiences.
  - Pioneer linguist I. A. Richards (1936) observed that words are arbitrary and have no intrinsic meaning.
  - Achieving commonality in meaning is more difficult than first imagined, particularly if one is using language that is not recognized or valued by another.
- Semiotics suggests that what people think of as "natural" or "obvious" in public discourse needs to be considered in context.
  - People's values and belief structures are often a result of what has been passed down from one generation to another (a tradition).
  - Semiotics challenges the notion that words have appropriate meanings; indeed, words change as the people using those words change.

C. The Phenomenological Tradition

- **Phenomenology** is a personal interpretation of everyday life and activities.
- Craig (2007) believes that the phenomenological tradition is marked by communication that he contends is an "experience of otherness" (p. 79).
  - What this means is that a person tries to attain authenticity by eliminating biases in a conversation.
  - Many phenomenologists believe that an individual's system of beliefs should not influence the dialogue taking place.
  - This is quite challenging, or, as Craig points out, is a "practical impossibility"(p. 80).

D. The Cybernetic Tradition

- Communication as information science was first introduced by Shannon and Weaver, two scholars associated with the linear model.
  - What Shannon and Weaver advanced was the belief that communication involves

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noise.
    - Cybernetics tries to unravel the complexities of message meaning by underscoring the unpredictability of the feedback people receive.
- Craig (2007) states: "[I]t is important for us as communicators to transcend our individual perspectives, to look at the communication process from a broader, systemic viewpoint, and not to hold individuals responsible for systemic outcomes that no individual can control" (p. 82).
- The cybernetic tradition asks people to understand that communication is not only information processing, but also that individuals enter into communication settings with different abilities.

E. The Socio-Psychological Tradition

- Communication theory is examined from a view that holds that someone's behavior is influenced by something else—something social psychologists call a "variable."
- Craig (2007) believes that underlying this tradition is the assumption that our own communication patterns and the patterns of others vary from one person to another.
- Carl Hovland's work and the work of other social psychologists underscored the importance of experimental research and trying to understand causal links.
    - It is this scientific evidence for human behavior that continues to pervade much communication theorizing from this tradition.

F. The Socio-Cultural Tradition

- The essence of the socio-cultural tradition can be summed up this way: "Our everyday interactions with others depend heavily on preexisting, shared cultural patterns and social structures" (Craig, 2007, p. 84).
    - The core of the socio-cultural tradition suggests that individuals are parts of larger groups who have unique rules and patterns of interaction.
    - To theorize from this tradition means to acknowledge and become sensitive to the many kinds of people who occupy this planet.
    - Theorists should not instinctively nor strategically "group" people without concern for individual identity.
- Socio-cultural theorists advocate that the binary "you/me" or "us/them" approach to understanding people be abandoned. Instead, appealing to the *co-creation* of social order/reality is a worthier goal for consideration.
    - As people communicate, they produce, maintain, repair, and transform reality (Carey, 1989).
    - Dialogue and interaction must be characterized by an understanding of what Craig

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(2007) calls "voice" (p. 84), an individual point of view that inevitably finds its way into everyday conversation.

G. The Critical Tradition

- Individuals who are concerned with injustice, oppression, power, and linguistic dominance are those who would likely identify themselves as critical theorists.
  - Critiquing the social order and imposing structures or individuals on that order are at the heart of critical theory.
  - Among the theorists most known for protesting social order is philosopher and political economist/revolutionary Karl Marx.
- Critical theorists find that openly questioning the assumptions that guide a society is legitimate.
  - In doing so, communicators expose the beliefs and values that guide their decision making and actions.

H. Putting it All Together

- Scholars enter into the theory-building process with particular positions, some of which influence the direction of the theories they construct and refine.
- Theory is not always so "clean" and therefore, there will be a hybrid of a few traditions along the way.

II. Seven Contexts in the Communication Field

- **Contexts** are environments in which communication takes place.
  - Contexts provide a backdrop against which researchers and theorists can analyze phenomena.
- The discussion of context focuses on **situational contexts.** To suggest that a context is situationally based means that the communication process is limited by a number of factors—namely, the number of people, the degree of space between interactants, the extent of feedback, and the available channels.
- There seems to be some universal agreement on the fundamental contexts of communication.
- In fact, most communication departments are built around some or all of the following seven communication contexts: intrapersonal, interpersonal, small group, organizational, public/rhetorical, mass/media, and cultural.

A. Intrapersonal Communication

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- **Intrapersonal communication** is communication with oneself. It is an internal dialogue and may take place even in the presence of another individual.
- Intrapersonal communication is usually more repetitive than other communication; a person engages in it many times each day. This context is also unique from other contexts in that it includes those times when a person imagines, perceives, daydreams, and solve problems in his or her head.
- Intrapersonal communication also includes the many attributions one makes about another person's behavior.
- Although some people may believe that talking to oneself is a bit peculiar, Virginia Satir (1988) believes that these internal dialogues may help individuals bolster their **self-esteem**—the degree of positive orientation people have about themselves.
    - Intrapersonal communication is difficult; it requires individuals to accept their accomplishments and confront their fears and anxieties.
- The research in intrapersonal communication centers a great deal on the cognitions, symbols, and intentions that individuals have.
- Researchers in this area have examined attitudes toward specific behaviors and events, including dating (McEwan & Guerrero, 2012), suspicion and detection, (Kim & Levine, 2011), mother–daughter relationships (Arroyo & Andersen, 2016), stress (Wright, 2012), silence (Bisel & Arterburn, 2012), attachment (Goodboy & Bolkan, 2011), and motivation of business executives (Millhous, 2004).

B. Interpersonal Communication

- **Interpersonal communication** is referred to face-to-face communication between people.
- Investigating how relationships begin, the maintenance of relationships, and the dissolution of relationships characterizes much of the interpersonal context.
- Interacting within different relationships affords communicators a chance to maximize the number of channels (visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory) used during an interaction.
- The interpersonal context itself comprises many related subcontexts.
    - Interpersonal researchers have studied the family (Koerner, 2015; Turner & West, 2015), friendships (Chen & Nakazawa, 2012), long-term marriages (Hughes & Dickson, 2006), physician–patient relationships (Gordon & Street, 2016), and the organization–public relationship (Ifert-Johnson & Acquavella, 2012).
    - In addition, researchers are interested in a host of issues and themes (e.g., risk, power, teasing, gossip, liking, attraction, emotions, etc.) associated with these relationships.
    - Researchers have also examined the link between interpersonal communication

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and mass media, organizations, and the classroom (Frymier & Houser, 2002) as well as the role that social media (Facebook) and email play in establishing and maintaining relationships (Lee, Choudry, Wu, Matlin, Brennan, & Schrank, 2016).

- Finally, relationships that have not been studied enough, including gay and lesbian relationships, cohabiting relationships, and Facebook friendships and computer-anchored relationships, are being investigated at a rapid pace in the communication field (Bryant & Marmo, 2012; Croom, Gross, Rosen & Rosen, 2016; Muraco & Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2011; Willoughby, Carroll, & Busby, 2012).

C. Small Group and Team Communication

- Small groups are composed of a number of people who work together to achieve some common purpose.
- Small group research focuses on task groups as opposed to the friendship and family groups found in the interpersonal context.
- Communication theory centering on small groups frequently concerns the dynamic nature of small groups, including group roles, boundaries, and trust.
- Researchers disagree about how many people make up a small group.
  - Some scholars argue that the optimal number for a small group is five to seven members, whereas others put no limit on the maximum number of members.
  - Nearly all agree, however, that there must be at least three people for a small group to exist (Poole, 2007; Schultz, 1996).
- **Small group communication** is defined as communication among at least three individuals.
- The number in a group is not as important as the implications of that number.
- The more people, the greater the opportunity for more personal relationships to develop.
  - This may influence whether small groups stay focused on their goals and whether group members are satisfied with their experiences (Shaw, 1981).
- People are influenced by the presence of others.
  - Some small groups are very cohesive, which means having a high degree of togetherness and a common bond.
  - This **cohesiveness** may influence whether the group functions effectively and efficiently.
  - The small group context affords individuals a chance to gain multiple perspectives on an issue.
  - In problem-solving groups, or task groups in particular, many perspectives may be advantageous.
  - This exchange of multiple perspectives results in **synergy**, and explains why small

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groups may be more effective than an individual at achieving goals.

- Networking and role behavior are two important components of small group behavior.
  - **Networks** are communication patterns through which information flows.
  - The small group context is made up of individuals who take on various **roles,** or the positions of group members and their relationship to the group.
  - These roles may be very diverse, including task leader, passive observer, active listener, recorder, and so forth.
- Team and small group communication scholars have studied meeting management (Rogelberg, Rhoades-Shanock, & Scott, 2012), emotional intelligence (Tajeddin, Safayeni, Connelly, & Tasa, 2012), gossip in public school classrooms (Jaworski & Coupland, 2005), conflict (Gross, Guerrero, & Alberts, 2004), creativity (Martins & Shalley, 2011), and cultural diversity (Zhang & Huai, 2016).
- From peer groups to task groups to support groups, the small group experience is a ubiquitous one.

D. Organizational Communication

- **Organizational communication** pertains to communication within and among large, extended environments.
  - This communication is extremely diverse in that organizational communication necessarily entails interpersonal encounters, public speaking opportunities, small group situations, and mediated experiences.
  - Theories of organizational communication are generally concerned with the functionality of the organization, including its climate, rules, and personnel.
- What distinguishes this context from others is that a clearly defined hierarchy exists in most organizations.
- **Hierarchy** is an organizing principle whereby things or persons are ranked one above the other.
  - Organizations are unique in that much of the communication taking place is highly structured, and role playing is often specialized and predictable.
  - Unlike in the interpersonal context, several modes of communication can substitute for face-to-face interaction, including email and teleconferencing.
- Many of the presentday organizational communication theories had their origins in a series of studies conducted in the mid-1920s to early 1930s. These studies, known as the **Hawthorne experiments,** were significant influences on modern theory in that they inaugurated the human relations approach to organizations (Jung & Lee, 2015).
- Researchers at the Western Electric Hawthorne plant in suburban Chicago were interested in determining the effect of lighting levels on employee productivity.
  - Results of this research indicated that not only did the environmental conditions

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influence employee output, but so did the interpersonal relationships with other employees and supervisors.
    - One conclusion arising from these studies was that organizations should be viewed as social entities; to speed up production, employers must consider workers' attitudes and feelings.
- Although the human relations approach has enjoyed a great deal of theoretical and research attention, today there are a number of additional organizational orientations, including cultural systems and scientific management.
- Organizational (communication) theory and research today address various eclectic issues, including the *Challenger* disaster (Gouran, Hirokawa, & Martz, 1986), uncertainty on the job (Waldeck, Seibold, & Flanagin, 2004), whistle-blowing (Miceli, Near, Rehg, & Van Scotter, 2012), rumor (Berbary, 2012), job training (Waldron & Lavitt, 2000), sexual harassment (McDonald & Charlesworth, 2016), and workplace bullying (Akella, 2016).

E. Public/Rhetorical Communication

- The fifth context is known as the **public communication** context, or the dissemination of information from one person to a large group.
- In public speaking, speakers usually have three primary goals in mind: to inform, to entertain, or to persuade.
    - This latter goal—persuasion—is at the core of rhetorical communication.
    - Many of the principles of persuasion—including audience analysis, speaker credibility, and verbal and nonverbal delivery of a message—are necessarily part of the persuasive process.
- **Rhetoric** is defined as a speaker's available means of persuading his or her audience. This definition was advanced many years ago by Aristotle.
    - The study of rhetoric is expansive and can include the study of texts of speeches, presidential inaugural addresses, and rhetorical analyses of cultural themes and issues.
    - Samples of rhetorical scholarship include analyses of the spanish gay and lesbian youth on YouTube (Acevedo-Callejas, 2016), Sarah Palin's Facebook posts (Lawrence & Schafer, 2012), President Nixon's speech on Vietnam (Drury, 2016), and abolitionist Frederick Douglass (Selby, 2000).
- One area in the public/rhetorical context that has received significant scholarly attention is **communication apprehension** (CA), or the general sense of fear of speaking before an audience.
    - The boundaries between and among the contexts are often blurred, and CA research is one example of that blurring. Although communication apprehension

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is a public speaking concern, CA focuses on intrapersonal issues.
- Researchers have advanced ways to reduce communication apprehension.

F. Mass/Media Communication

- The sixth context is the mass communication or mediated context, which targets large audiences.
- **Mass media** refers to the channels, or delivery modes, for mass messages. Mass media include newspapers, videos, CD-ROMs, (tablet) computers, TV, radio, and so forth.
- **Mass communication** refers to communication to a large audience via one of these channels of communication.
- Although mass communication frequently refers to "traditional" venues (e.g., newspapers), discussion is expanded by including **new media,** which encompasses computer-related technology.
- Mass communication pertains communication to a large audience via multiple channels of communication.
- The mass communication is distinctive. It allows both senders and receivers to exercise control.
  - Sources such as a newspaper editor or a television broadcaster make decisions about what information should be sent, and receivers have control over what they decide to read, listen to, watch, or review.
- Some, like theorist Stuart Hall, suggest that mass media inherently serve the interests of the elite, especially big business and multinational corporations, who, Hall suggests, fund much of the research in mass communication.
- A myriad of topics using a mass media framework have been studied, including the portrayal of sex on prime-time television (Eyal & Finnerty, 2007), online dating sites (Kang & Hoffman, 2011), heroes in the movie *The Matrix* (Stroud, 2001), racist ideologies in Orange is the New Black (Enck & Morissey, 2015), email (Turnage, 2007), grandparent personal websites (Harwood, 2000), and an analysis of *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* (Hmielowski, Holbert, & Lee, 2011).
- Although a large number of homes and businesses subscribe to new technologies, a gap will always exist between those who have the resources and those who do not.
- Consequently, future mass communication theorists may have to rethink the universality of their theories.

G. Cultural Communication

- **Culture** can be viewed as a "community of meaning and a shared body of local knowledge" (Gonzalez, & Chen, 2015, p. 5).

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- **Cultural communication,** therefore, refers to communication between and among individuals whose cultural backgrounds vary.
- **Co-cultures** are groups of individuals who are part of the same larger culture, but who—through unity and individual identification around such attributes as race, ethnicity, sexual identity, religion, and so forth—create opportunities of their own.
    - The word, *co-culture,* is now widely accepted in the academic community as a replacement for *subculture,* a term suggesting that one culture has dominance over another culture.
- Cultural communication is an historically important academic context, with its beginnings traced back only to the 1950s (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990).
    - Technological availability, population shifts, and genuine efforts to understand other cultures contribute to the growing interest and frequent conversations pertaining to this context.
    - Some cultural events have helped jumpstart the 21st century cultural conversations (e.g., Senator Barack Obama becoming president), but these conversations are still fraught with challenges because not everyone becomes engaged with these dialogues.
- The cultural context differentiates itself in several ways.
    - This context is the only context that specifically addresses culture.
    - Study in intercultural communication context means that researchers inherently accept the fact that human behavior is culturally based.

H. Collating the Contexts

- In discussing these seven contexts, a basic category system for dividing the broad field of communication is provided.
- These seven categories help one discuss the communication process more clearly and specifically.
- Yet the template is not perfect, and as noted in the discussion, there is often overlap among the categories.
- Hence, one should not view these categories as completely exclusive and distinctive from one another.

Classroom Activities

1. If You Were a Communication Scholar . . .

Objective: The objective is to help students differentiate between traditions in the field of communication.

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Materials: None

Directions:

1. Divide the class into seven groups.
2. Assign a particular tradition to each group, and ask the students to imagine themselves as communication scholars rooted in that particular tradition.
3. Have students discuss and write major beliefs and topics of interest for their particular tradition as if they were explaining the tradition to scholars from other traditions.
4. Allow class time for the groups to share and discuss their ideas.

2. Visualizing the Transactional Process in the Various Contexts of Communication

Objective: The objective is to afford students the opportunity to examine the transactional model of communication in various communication contexts.

Materials: None

Directions:

1. In small groups, have students describe how the elements of the transactional model of communication work in at least three different communication contexts.
2. Have the groups create a diagram for each context. In each diagram, the students should identify all the elements and indicate how they relate to the others.
3. Have groups share their diagrams with the class, explaining the elements and their relationships to each other.

3. Communication Contexts and Research Topics

Objective: The objective is to have students analyze their research preferences and begin to outline research topics.

Materials: None

Directions:

1. Have the students write the communication context(s) that most appeal(s) to them.
2. Ask the students to specify three issues or topics related to each context they identify, encouraging them to state their interests as questions they could answer through research.

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3. If class time permits, have students share their work. If there are any theories that relate to their issues or topics and that will be discussed later in the course, mention them to show the relevance or importance of the students' ideas.

4. Theory Application in Groups

Objective: The objective is to introduce students to the research challenges associated with each of the seven contexts of communication.

Materials: None

Directions:

1. Divide students into small groups and ask them to rank the relative difficulty of research in each communication context, from most difficult to easiest.
2. Upon completion of this ranking task, ask students to explain what guided their rankings, what they consider difficult, what they consider easy, and what agreements and disagreements existed among their group members.

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Introducing Communication Theory: Analysis and Application

6th edition

Richard West, Lynn H. Turner

Because learning changes everything.™

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Chapter 2

THINKING ABOUT THE FIELD: TRADITIONS AND CONTEXTS

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Chapter Overview

Seven traditions in the communication field

Seven contexts in the communication field

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Seven Traditions
(Craig, 1999; Craig & Muller, 2007)

Rhetorical

Semiotic

Phenomenological

Cybernetic

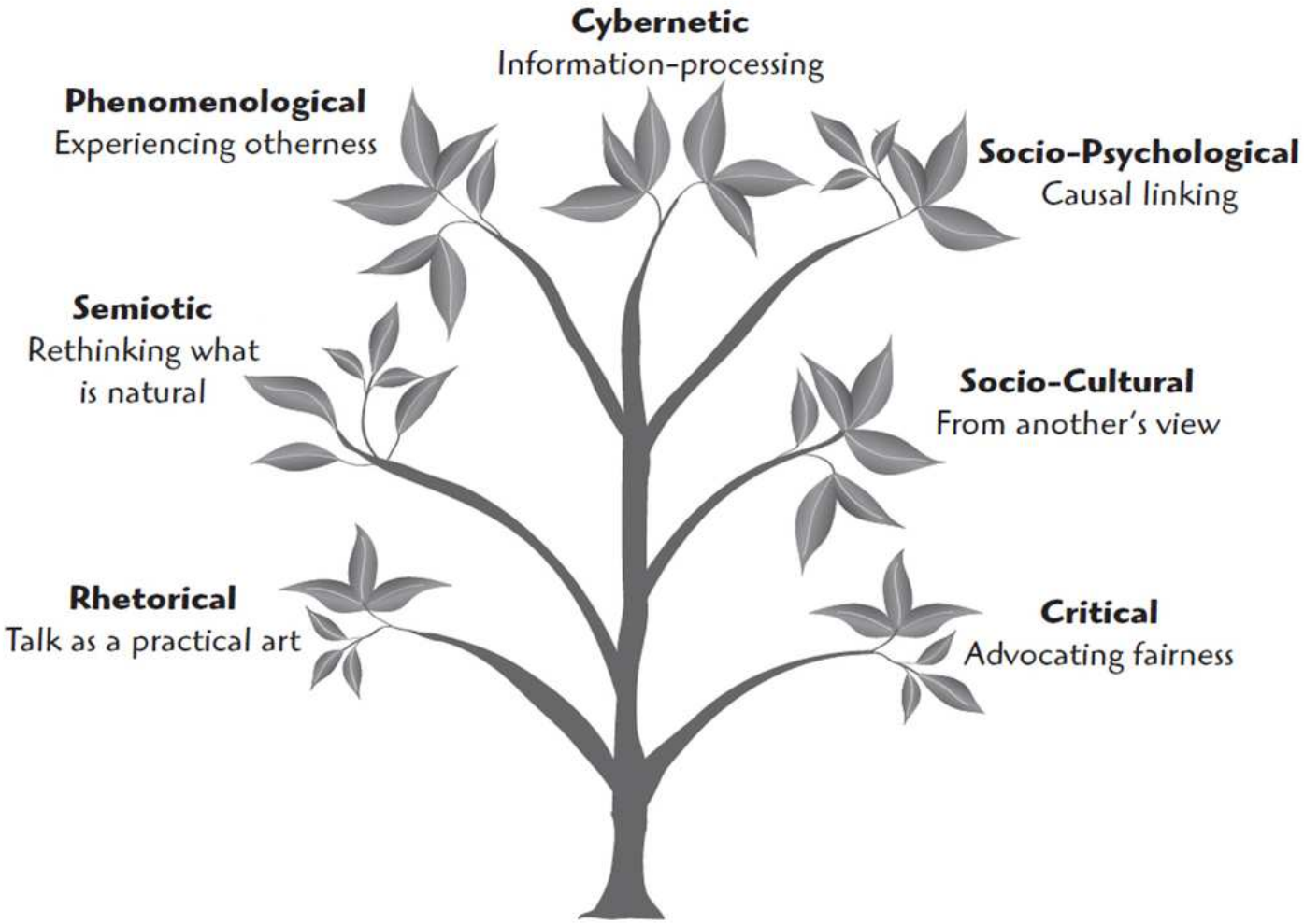
Socio-psychological

Socio-cultural

Critical

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Figure 2.1 - Traditions in Communication Theory



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The Rhetorical Tradition

Emphasizes talk as a practical art

Reflects an interest in public speaking and its societal functions

Involves elements pertaining to language

Acknowledges audience appeals

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The Semiotic Tradition

Emphasizes rethinking what is natural

Involves the study of signs

Meaning is achieved when we share a common language

Values and belief structures are passed down from one generation to another

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The Phenomenological Tradition

Emphasizes experiencing of otherness

Reflects the personal interpretation of everyday life and activities

Involves communication as attaining authenticity

Individual's system of beliefs should not influence the dialogue taking place

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The Cybernetic Tradition

Views communication as information science

Involves looking at the communication process from a broader, systemic viewpoint

Emphasizes that communication is more than information processing

Acknowledges differing levels of ability

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The Socio-Psychological Tradition

Emphasizes causal linking

Reflects the notion that behavior is influenced by one or more variables

Acknowledges that communication patterns vary across people

- Social psychologists must attempt to unravel the relationship among these patterns

Uses experimental research

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The Socio-Cultural Tradition

An individual point of view finds its way into everyday conversation

Acknowledges that shared cultural patterns and social structures influence communication

Involves viewing social order or reality as co-created

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The Critical Tradition

Reflects a concern for injustice, oppression, power, and linguistic dominance

Involves a critique of the social order

Acknowledges the importance of openly questioning assumptions

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Seven Contexts of Communication

Intrapersonal

Interpersonal

Small group and team

Organizational

Public/rhetorical

Mass/media

Cultural

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Intrapersonal Communication

Communication with oneself

Focuses on the role of cognition in behavior

Includes imagining, perceiving, daydreaming, and problem-solving

Includes attributions you may make about another person's behaviour

May bolster **self-esteem**

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Interpersonal Communication

Face-to-face communication between people

Investigates how relationships begin, are maintained, and dissolve

Subcontexts include family, friendships, marriages, and so forth

Issues include risk, teasing, attraction, etc.

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Small Group and Team Communication

Three or more people working toward a common task-related purpose

Concerned with the dynamic nature of groups

Disagreement about what number constitutes a small group

People are influenced by the presence of others

Networking and role behavior

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Organizational Communication

Communication within and among large, extended environments

Concerned with climate, rules, and personnel

Distinguished by clearly defined **hierarchy**

Foundation of contemporary research lies in **Hawthorne experiments**

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Figure 2.3: Example of Hierarchy in Higher Education



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Public/Rhetorical Communication

Dissemination of information from one person to a large group

Goals of public speaking

- To inform
- To entertain
- To persuade

Early rhetorical principles of Aristotle applied to texts of speeches

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Public/Rhetorical Communication
(continued)

Research has shifted from textual analysis to analysis of themes and issues

Communication apprehension

Rhetoric: A speaker's available means of persuasion

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Mass/Media Communication

Mass media: Channels or delivery modes for mass messages

Mass communication: Communication to a large audience via various channels

Both senders and receivers exercise control

There is a growing diversity of mass communication researchers and theorists

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Cultural Communication

Communication between individuals whose cultural backgrounds vary

Culture: A community of meaning with a shared body of knowledge

Co-cultures exist within a larger common culture

Academic roots begin in the 1950s and have grown due to the growth across organizational cultures

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